DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 098 477 CG 009 368

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TITLE	On the Validity of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory: The Social Adequacy Subscales and Social Action. Report No. 177.
INSTITUTION	Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, Md. Center for the Study of Social Organization of Schools.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	CSOS-R-177
PUB DATE	Jun 74
NOTE	13p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	College Students; *Individual Development; *Interpersonal Competence; Maturation; Research Projects; Social Behavior; *Social Development; *Social Maturity; *Test Validity
IDENTIFIERS	*Psychosocial Maturity Inventory

ABSTRACT

This study provides evidence for the validity of the Social Adequacy subscales of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory: Social Commitment, Tolerance, and Openness to Change. A group of students who invested substantial time and energy in social action projects directed toward helping others was compared with a randomly chosen control group. The group involved in social action projects scored significantly higher than the control group on all three subscales as well as the Social Adequacy summary score. (Author)

ED 098477

ON THE VALIDITY OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL MATURITY INVENTORY: THE SOCIAL ADEQUACY SUBSCALES AND SOCIAL ACTION

CONTRACT NO. NE-C-00-3-0113

WORK UNIT NO. 2

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REPORT NO. 177

June, 1974

CG 009 368

Published by the Center for Social Organization of Schools, supported in part as a research and development center by funds from the United States National Institute of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Institute of Education, and no official endorsement by the Institute should be inferred.

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The Center for Social Organization of Schools has two primary objectives: to develop a scientific knowledge of how schools affect their students, and to use this knowledge to develop better school practices and organization.

The Center works through three programs to achieve its objectives. The Schools and Maturity program is studying the effects of school, family, and peer group experiences on the development of attitudes consistent with psychosocial maturity. The objectives are to formulate, assess, and research important educational goals other than traditional academic achievement. The School Organization program is currently concerned with authority-control structures, task structures, reward systems, and peer group processes in schools. The Careers program (formerly Careers and Curricula) bases its work upon a theory of career development. It has developed a self-administered vocational guidance device and a self-directed career program to promote vocational development and to foster satisfying curricular decisions for high school, college, and adult populations.

This report, prepared by the Schools and Maturity program, is part of the program's examination of the validity of the psychosocial maturity (PSM) inventory.

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to establish evidence for the validity of the three Social Adequacy subscales (Tolerance, Openness to Change, and Social Commitment) of the Psychosocial Maturity (PSM) Inventory developed by Greenberger et al. (1974). Previous research has demonstrated that scores on these subscales and six others, which comprise the entire inventory, are significantly related to teacher ratings of student behavior (Josselson, et al., 1974) and that scores increase with age (Greenberger, et al., 1974). This study examines the validity of the three subscales by comparing mean scores of a group of students actively involved in helping others with the scores of a control group.

The detailed model of psychosocial maturity has been presented elsewhere (Greenberger & Sørensen, 1973). In this conceptualization, three general capacities are considered necessary for mature functioning in any given culture -- Individual Adequacy, Interpersonal Adequacy, and Social Adequacy. Social Adequacy concerns the person's ability to "contribute to the cohesion of the larger social system" (Greenberger & Sørensen, 1973). The model posits three specific components of Social Adequacy: Social Commitment, Openness to Socio-Political Change, and Tolerance of Individual and Cultural Differences.

Social Commitment is a characteristic of individuals who have a "concern for the welfare of the total group." It is defined in terms of (1) feelings of community with others; (2) willingness to modify personal goals in behalf of social goals; (3) readiness to undertake alliances with others in pursuit of social goals; and (4) interest in long term social goals. Openness to Socio-Political Change implies a general lack of rigid social attitudes and a recognition of both the costs of the status quo and the costs of change. Tolerance

of Individual and Cultural Differences denotes a willingness to interact with, and sensitivity to the rights of, people who differ from the norm. It also suggests an awareness of the costs and benefits of tolerance (Greenberger & Sørensen, 1973).

The present study relates scores on these subscales to "real world" behavior of respondents. A criterion group which displayed, in their activities, the attributes of social commitment, tolerance and openness to change was identified. It was hypothesized that these senior high school and college students who were involved in social action projects would have higher scores on the social adequacy subscales than a random (control) group of college students.

METHOD

Subjects

The experimental group consisted of 71 (26 male, 45 female) senior high school and university students (freshmen through seniors) who, at the time of the study, were involved in one of two volunteer, social action programs sponsored by the Johns Hopkins University Chaplain's Office. The programs, a tutoring project and a juvenile delinquency program, were chosen because they both required a substantial investment of personal time and effort by the students involved. The tutoring program provided elementary school children of Baltimore City with weekly one-to-one tutoring in reading and mathematics, and the delinquency program involved both classroom study and field work with individual juvenile delinquents. Participation in such programs, it was postulated, would exemplify more or less explicitly the four attributes of Social Commitment outlined above. While less explicit, the relation between Tolerance and Openness to Socio-Political Change and voluntary participation in the programs is at least conceptually implied. That is, flexible social attitudes (Openness to

Change) and a willingness to interact with disadvantaged individuals (Tolerance) should characterize volunteers who are drawn to the projects and/or should result from volunteers' experiences in such projects.

The subscales were also administered to a control group of 44 university students (23 male, 20 female, freshmen through seniors) enrolled in two short mid-semester psychology courses, who had never participated in social action projects.

Procedures

The combined Tolerance, Change and Social Commitment subscales of the PSM inventory were administered.[1] These subscales yield a composite, factor-derived, Social Adequacy summary score as well as three separate scores. A nine-item Social Desirability scale was also administered.

After completing the PSM subscales, subjects supplied background information on their age, sex, grade level, grade point average, college major (if a college student), occupational expectations, and extra-curricular activities. One subject was eliminated from the control group because he responded affirmatively to the question, "While in college, have you participated in any social action projects (e.g., tutoring of low income children, volunteer work in prisons or hospitals, etc.)?" Three subjects from the experimental group were eliminated because of incomplete responses. Both groups were informed that the study involved "research on the attitudes and opinions of high school and college students."

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[1] Short Forms (Form C) of the Tolerance and Change subscales were administered. The short scales correlate .90 and .91 respectively with the longer, Form B version (Greenberger, et al., 1974). The long form of the Social Commitment subscale, Form B, was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The scores of the two groups are presented in Table 1. The social action group scored significantly higher on all three PSM subscales than did the control group. This difference is clearly reflected in the composite Social Adequacy score obtained by combining mean scores on all three measures. Although there was a slight tendency for the control sample to score higher on the Social Desirability scale than the experimental group, this difference was not significant.

Insert Table 1 About Here

To determine the degree to which the group scores actually differed, Tilton's (1937) overlap statistic was computed. The computed 0 values for the Social Commitment, Tolerance, and Change scores were .77, .74, and .38, indicating distribution overlaps of 70%, 71%, and 85%, respectively. The 0 value for the composite Social Adequacy scores was .87, corresponding to an overlap percentage of 66%. Dunnette (1966) has provided a convenient rule for determining the significance of these figures, noting that overlap percentages between 75 percent and 50 percent "may generally be taken as indicating moderately good relationships between a measure and a dichotomous behavior classification" (p. 147).

Previous research has indicated that PSM scores are positively correlated with academic achievement and age (Greenberger et al., 1971, 1974; McConochie, 1974). Analysis of the biographical data for both groups revealed no signifi-

cant differences in age or academic achievement. The mean age for both groups was 18.8 years. The grade point average (A = 4.00) was 2.98 for the experimental group (SD = .57) and 3.18 for the control group (SD = .72). This difference was not significant (t = 1.08).

Previous research has also shown that large differences exist between males and females on the social adequacy subscales (McConochie, 1974). Although the males and females in this sample were not significantly different on the Social Adequacy composite score (t = 1.71), the trend was in the expected direction and it was thought possible that the preponderance of females in the experimental (social action) group might account for the observed differences between the experimental and control groups. To test this potential interpretation of the findings, analyses of the data were carried out separately for males and females. The question to be answered was whether the social adequacy subscales could differentiate socially committed males from control males and socially committed females from control females.

The results, presented in Table 2, indicate that differences between the social action and control groups cannot be explained merely on the basis of differences in the distribution of males and females. Males in the social action group scored significantly higher than did males in the control group on both the Social Commitment and Tolerance subscales. Females in the social action group scored significantly higher on Social Commitment than females in the control group. The Change subscale did not significantly differentiate the sexes across the two groups; nor were females in the social action group significantly different from control females on Tolerance. The composite Social Adequacy summary score, however, did significantly differentiate social action from control subjects within each sex. Therefore, despite the sex differences that exist in this cluster of subscales, the Social Adequacy measures can discriminate socially committed males from males not so committed and socially

committed females from control females. This more demanding test of the subscales adds weight to their predictive validity by demonstrating their sensitivity to traits beyond those embedded in sex differences.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Three general conclusions are suggested by these results: (1) The Social Adequacy measures of the PSM inventory can reliably distinguish between persons who have exhibited real-life behavior conventionally viewed as "socially committed," "tolerant" and directed toward "social change" and persons not presumably so characterized; (2) this distinction can be made even when males and females are taken as separate groups; and (3) the Social Commitment subscale, which was believed to reflect the characteristic most central to participation in the social action programs described above, in fact was the best discriminator between individuals who are and are not engaged in social action projects.

Summary

This study provides additional evidence for the validity of the Tolerance, Change, and Social Commitment subscales of the PSM inventory. The group of young people who invested substantial time and energy in helping others had higher mean scores than a random control group on all three Social Adequacy subscales.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Socially Committed And Control Students on Social Adequacy Subscales

	Socially Committed N = 71		Control N = 43		
Subscale	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t
Social Commitment	3.34	.31	3.07	.39	3.99 **
Tolerance	3.67	.30	3.44	.32	3.90 **
Openness to Change	3.49	.30	3.37	.34	2.09 *
Social Adequacy	10.50	.64	9.88	.80	4.59 **
Social Desirability	2.19	.47	2.29	.44	-1.11

*p $<$ .05, two-tailed test

**p $<$ .001, two-tailed test

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations (by sex) of Socially Committed

And Control Students on Social Adequacy Subscales

	Socially Committed		Control		
Subscale	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t
A. MALES	N = 26		N = 23		
Social Commitment	3.27	.35	3.03	.43	2.18 *
Tolerance	3.72	.25	3.39	.33	3.93 ***
Openness to Change	3.42	.33	3.32	.36	1.03
Social Adequacy	10.41	.59	9.74	.78	3.52 ***
Social Desirability	2.19	.50	2.25	.50	-0.48
B. FEMALES	N = 45		N = 20		
Social Commitment	3.38	.29	3.12	.35	3.07 **
Tolerance	3.64	.32	3.50	.31	1.70
Openness to Change	3.53	.27	3.42	.31	1.48
Social Adequacy	10.55	.67	10.05	.80	2.62 *
Social Desirability	2.19	.45	2.32	.37	-1.18

*p $<$ .05, two-tailed test

**p $<$ .01, two-tailed test

***p $<$ .001, two-tailed test